

Choosing a Theme

Three steps to identifying the theme you wish to use

1. Select your topic (subject)
2. Narrow your topic selection
3. Write your theme statement (specific message) as a complete sentence

Example:

Select a topic:	Heritage buildings in Dunedin
Theme/Message	Larnach Castle
Theme statement	William Larnach's decision to build a home in Dunedin has created the only heritage castle in New Zealand

Questions to ask when choosing a theme:

- Is my theme stated as a complete sentence?
 - Keeping the theme statement in mind helps to target your research
- Does my theme tell an important story about the site which will enrich my interpretation?
 - Why was this site chosen then? Does this still apply now?
- Is this a theme that my audience can relate to?
 - Does my audience want highly technical information or can I weave the story of William Larnach around the castle site
- Am I really interested in the theme? Do I have the resources for research?
 - If you have no interest in the topic of your interpretation, why would anyone else? Can you find enough sources of information to research your interpretation?
- If a visitor were asked what my interpretation was about, would they be able to identify the theme?
 - Practice your talk in front of someone, ask them this question. If they can't tell you what your theme was, then go through the three steps of the checklist again.